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CONTACT:

Mike Dropka 312-814-8449

Michael.Dropka@illinois.gov

**Illinois Interagency Committee for Employees with Disabilities (ICED)
Announces Outstanding Employee of the Year**

Springfield, IL – For John Eckert, working as senior policy advisor at the Illinois Department on Aging isn't so much a job, as it is a calling – a vocation. The Illinois Interagency Committee for Employees with Disabilities in October named John Eckert its 2017 Outstanding Employee of the Year. Jean Bohnhoff, director of the Department on Aging, and Mr. Eckert's nominator said, "For John, it's about helping people. Whether it's ensuring an individual can transition to a community with access to needed housing, or making sure a person has the supplies necessary to set up a new, independent living apartment, John's always there. It's not about the titles for him, but a mission of serving others. That's why he's our outstanding employee – and now, the committee's as well."

Mr. Eckert, with a Master's in Rehabilitation Administration and Services from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, maintains a primary focus on rebalancing the long-term care system to ensure that individuals with disabilities and the elderly have every opportunity to live independently in their communities. This commitment to mission is reflected in the long list of social initiatives that bear his indelible imprint of leadership.

He has long-served as the Department on Aging's leader for the Federal *Money Follows the Person* Demonstration Program, a Medicaid improvement project aimed at better serving the elderly and those with disabilities. He is the chair of Illinois' Inter-Agency Long-Term Services and Support rebalancing project for Medicaid, and serves as the agency's co-lead for Older Americans Services Advisory Committee. Mr. Eckert is also co-lead for both the implementation of the Federal Person-Centered Planning Requirements and the Nursing Facility Deflection Project.

Mr. Eckert has long been considered a dedicated advocate for individuals with disabilities as well as the elderly, and he works tirelessly to serve them through policy and inter-agency collaboration. He is seen by his Department on Aging colleagues and peers across all other statewide human services agencies as a subject matter expert and patient, thoughtful mentor to others. This award and its recognition validates the views of his colleagues, clients, and the communities he serves.

About the Illinois Department on Aging

The mission of the Illinois Department on Aging is to serve and advocate for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life.

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